

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE HIBERT LECTURES.
THE NATIVE RELIGIONS OF MEXICO AND PERU.
By ALBERT REVILLE, D. D. Translated by PHILIP H.
WICKSTEAD, M. A. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Perhaps it is because of the character of the subject that the Hibert Lectures for 1884 are inferior in interest to those of former years; but whatever the cause, the fact is so. The native religions of Mexico and Peru do not, indeed, afford solid ground for useful inference as to the genesis of religious sentiment and ritual. Partaking as they do of the characteristics which are common to all religions everywhere, they present also so many morbid and repellent features that no theory of the origin of such monstrosities serves to make it clear how the human mind could have satisfied any desire for worship in such perverse and hideous ways. To the modern student, however, the most interesting question is as to the causes of the many strange resemblances to the ritualism, the symbolism, the art and the modes of religious expression of other races and countries, found in Peru and Mexico. The first and most natural idea of course was that these resemblances were the result of actual communication with other peoples. Later research and criticism have, however, failed to support this hypothesis, and the view now taken by advanced thinkers, and held by Mr. Reville in these lectures, is that the resemblances spoken of are but evidence that the human mind, under like conditions, reaches like conclusions everywhere.

It must, however, be said that this view is only after all, a good working hypothesis, and not sufficiently established to warrant dogmatism. Yet Mr. Reville appears to employ it throughout as a settled and indisputable fact, ignoring the by no means unimportant arguments which have been made on the other side by men as competent as Tytler, for example. It is no doubt true that the ancient inhabitants of Mexico and Peru present a most perplexing admixture of national characteristics, and that it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to comprehend races which were at once singularly poetical and sentimental, and singularly ferocious and cruel. But the significance of their religion seems to be, finally, that they had gone wholly wrong in the line of the higher culture, and that even if they had not been wiped out, and the Spanish conquest they must have decayed and fallen back into barbarism, toward which they were plainly tending when Cortes and Pizarro entered upon the scene. Mr. Reville has brought a great deal of interesting information concerning the old American religions into a convenient compass, but he can scarcely be said to have thrown any new light upon the subject.

DIARY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF SAMUEL COLTON. Esq., F. & W. with a Life and Notes by RICHARD AND LORDE BRAYBROOKE. Deciphered, with additional Notes by REV. MYNARS BRIGHT, M. A. Ten volumes. Dodd, Mead & Co.

Dodd & Mead have issued a very neat and handy edition of Mynars Bright's extension of Pepys, in ten volumes, duodecimo, cloth binding. The Mynars Bright edition contains fully a third more matter than that edited by Lord Braybrooke, and it has the further advantage of a careful revision of the notes first deciphered, and which in many cases were wrongly translated. The list of corrections made is given at the end of each volume in this edition, and the aggregate is so large as to demonstrate the need for revision. In this latest form we probably have the fullest edition of Pepys's Diary that will ever be made public. It is indeed possible that hereafter some enterprising decipherer may imagine it a duty to give the world as internal and complete a rendering of the old Naval Secretary's records as Messrs. Payne and Burton have thought fit to do in the case of "The Thousand and One Nights." But it is certain that no other reason can exist for further translation of the Pepys's short-hand than a desire to add to the piquancy of the recollections that element of impudence which until recently has been the literary monopoly of a continental nation.

As they stand to-day, Pepys's Diary and Correspondence constitute the most agreeable reading to be found. The perfect candor of the record is the explanation of their charm. Pepys never intended his diary to see the light. He wrote it for his own peculiar pleasure. He set down in it all his own faults without periphsis. He drew so exact a portrait of himself, with a thousand subtle unconscious touches, that we know him better than almost any historical personage. And though the world has laughed very heartily over his confessions, his manifestations of innocent conceit and vanity, his pride in his belongings, his too obvious amanuenses, and the many scrapes into which his appreciation of pretty faces brought him with his loving but jealous wife, it is very certain that the diarist was really a man of considerable distinction and mark, that he worthily and by hard and good work won all his elevation, that he was highly esteemed by men like John Evelyn, whose endorsement must be accepted unquestionably, and that while he performed his public duties with zeal and talent, he was a good husband, friend and human also. His information was varied and extensive. He possessed rare powers of observation and description; and he has left us a most invaluable and altogether unique picture of an age—the salient features of which can be seen with like clearness nowhere else than in his pages.

His judgments on his contemporaries are not always sound, but they are at least honest, and usually he gives his reasons. Like most of the men of his time, he undervalued Shakespeare, and not only Shakespeare, but many other writers who have since been restored to their rightful eminence. Thus we find him denouncing Webster's "Duchess of Malfi" as poor stuff, though it is now admitted to be only second to Shakespeare's tragedy. But Pepys's errors of criticism were those of his day, while some of his best points were beyond the standard of his time. Thus he was an honest man in an exceptionally corrupt period, and indeed it may almost be said that his public spirit and integrity more than ones seem to have been the only safeguard of a Navy in danger of perishing through the venality of its official heads.

The popularity of Pepys, however, will probably always be due in the main to his geniality, simplicity and candor. It has been said by a great thinker that the complete record of the life of the meanest man cannot fail to possess a deep interest for humanity, and autobiographical experience confirms this view. When, in addition to frank disclosure of the springs of action and the conclusions of meditation, a fund of valuable information on little-known habits, customs and people, belonging to a past generation, is laid before us, clothed in quaint and archaic language, the whole inevitably forms a literary treasure the appreciation of which is certain to increase as time bears us further from the scenes so graphically described by Samuel Pepys. And it may well be that the labored works of ambitious yearners after immortality will have lapsed into forgetfulness long before the world has ceased to take keen pleasure in the study of this diary, which was never meant by the writer to be made public property.

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